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ABSTRACT

One of several papers arising from a spring 1988 survey of 264 graduating college seniors at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), this report focuses on student attitudes toward: (1) campus opportunities; (2) campus resources; (3) major (or departmental) advising; and (4) faculty/student relations. Overall, results indicate general student satisfaction with undergraduate life. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with their departmental (or major) advising although 65% stated they met with their advisor once or less per semester. Among other findings were that students were pleased with student friendships and cultural events and least happy with residence hall life. Contains two references. (DB)

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The 1984 Freshman as Seniors: Senior Opinions of Campus Life

Prepared by:

Stephen J. Flannelly

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CB# 3350, 200 CARR BUILDING
CHAPEL HILL, N.C. 27599-3350
(919) 962-3071

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The 1984 Freshmen as Seniors: Senior Opinions of Campus Life

Prepared by:

Stephen J. Flannelly
Graduate Research Assistant

Office of Institutional Research
CB# 3350, 200 Carr Building
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3350
919-962-3071

June, 1990

The 1984 Freshmen as Seniors: Senior Opinions of Campus Life

Further examination of a follow-up survey given to seniors in the spring of 1988 reveals high levels of satisfaction with both college generally and UNC in particular, and widespread contentment with academic advising and the UNC faculty. Overall satisfaction was reported with a range of UNC resources and opportunities, and modest relationships were noted between (1) the level of faculty/student contact and student satisfaction with the frequency of faculty interaction, and (2) faculty/student contact and academic achievement.

This report is the second to arise out of a survey of 264 graduating seniors in the spring of 1988. The first report ("The 1984 Freshmen as Seniors", 1989) compared senior survey responses on political orientation and desired life objectives questions to those responses given by the seniors themselves as freshmen in 1984, as well as the 1988 freshman class. Modest liberalizing trends were noted as the students progressed from freshmen to seniors, findings that have also been seen by other researchers.

The survey results presented in this report will focus primarily on four areas: 1) student opinions on four campus opportunities, 2) student satisfaction with three campus resources, 3) major (or departmental) advising, and 4) faculty/student relations. The intent in providing this data is to supply a brief overview of the seniors' responses concerning

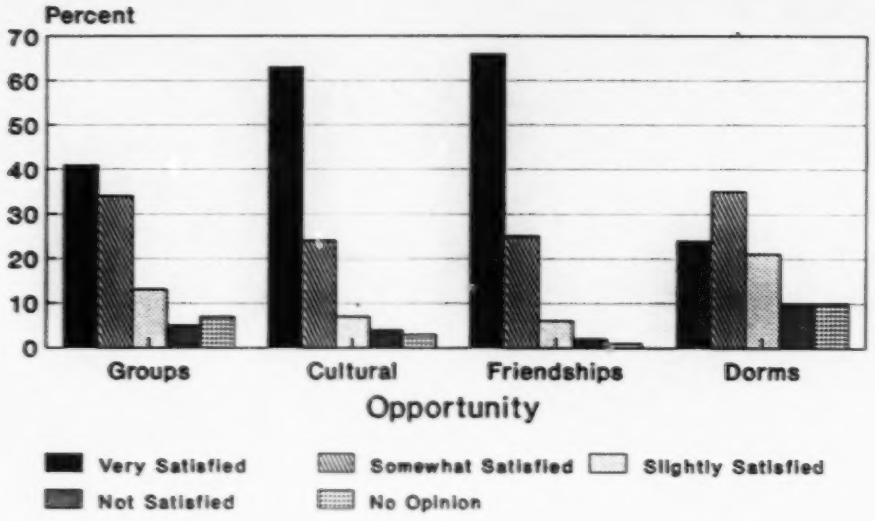
important aspects of their undergraduate experience. While data on additional campus experiences were collected in the survey, an effort has been made here to highlight certain key areas for the sake of brevity. The effects of the level of faculty/student contact will be included to provide further information on this area of college life beyond that supplied by the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) surveys ("Student/Faculty Contact and Academic Quality of Effort: Excerpted Results From CSEQ Surveys, 1985-1988", 1990). Only responses to the senior follow-up survey will be presented in this report since few of these questions appeared on the surveys presented to the freshmen.

Results

To begin, the students were asked two general questions pertaining to educational fulfillment, the first of which was: How well do you like college? Eighty-seven percent of the students responded that they either liked or loved college, 9% were neutral, and less than 4% responded negatively. When asked if they would return to UNC if they could start college over again, 92% responded definitely or probably, while only 8% replied they would not attend UNC if they could choose once more.

Figure 1 (facing page) shows student ratings of four campus opportunities: 1) personal involvement in student organizations (Groups), 2) attending cultural events such as concerts and lectures (Cultural), 3) developing friendships with other students (Friendships), and 4) residence hall life (Dorms).

1984 Follow-Up Survey Figure 1
Satisfaction with Campus Opportunities



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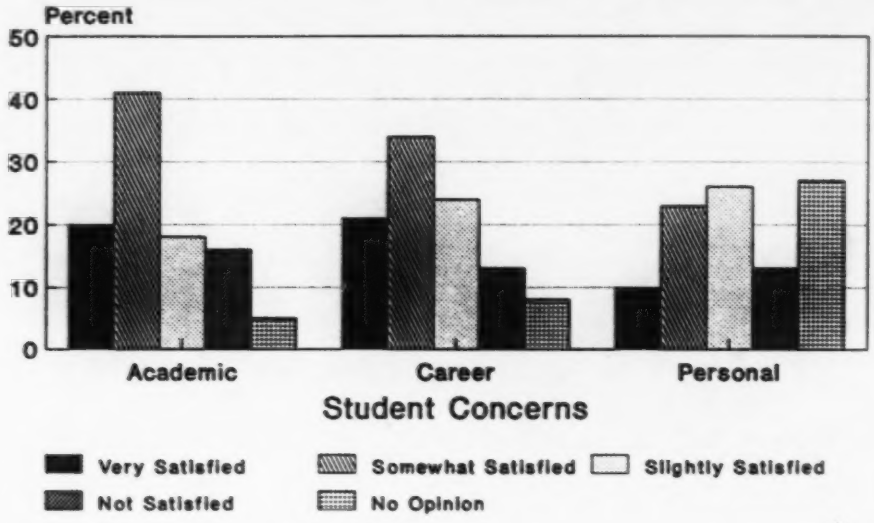
As seen in the figure, students reported they were pleased with student friendships and cultural events, generally pleased with student groups, and the least happy with residence hall life. In the last item, however, 59% of the students still reported being either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with dormitory life.

Figure 2 (next page) shows student opinion on the availability and value of campus resources to help students with academic, career, and personal concerns. The highest levels of approval were found with academic concerns, followed by careers, and then personal issues. Noteworthy, perhaps, is the finding that 27% of the respondents reported no opinion on the personal concerns question, which may indicate the extent of senior

1984 Follow-Up Survey Figure 2
Satisfaction with Concerns Resources



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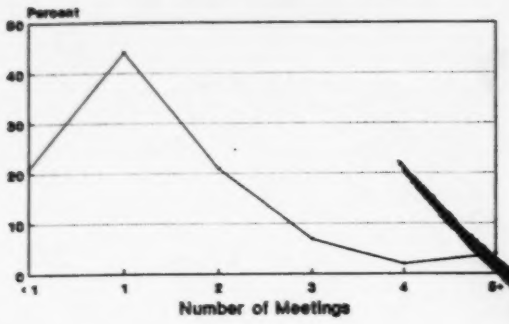
utilization of these resources.

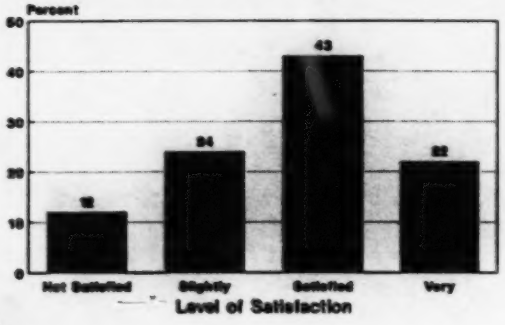
Figure 3 (facing page) is a series of graphs referring to questions concerning the major (or departmental) advising system at UNC-CH. The graphs focus on: (a) the average number of advisor appointments per semester, (b) the student's overall level of satisfaction with those meetings, (c) a comparison of the number of appointments with perceived student satisfaction, and (d) the sufficiency of the meetings for the students' needs. Figure 3c shows that as the number of appointments per semester increases, so does the level of student satisfaction, with a "satisfactory" rating being given at about two meetings per semester. A similiar relationship was noticed with meeting

1984 Follow-Up Survey Figure 3

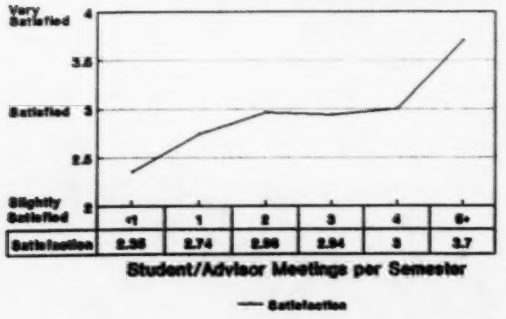
(a) Number of Advisor Meetings Per Semester



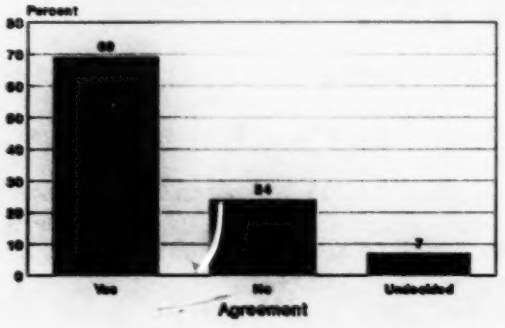
(b) Satisfaction with Quality of Advisor Meetings



(c) Student/Advisor Contact and Student Satisfaction w/Contact Quality



(d) Felt the Number and Length of Meetings Were Sufficient



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length, whereby an increase in time was also accompanied by a rise in approval.

These survey results indicate that while seniors were generally satisfied with the advising system (Figure 3d), 24% answered "no" as to whether the number and length of meetings were sufficient for their needs. Analysis of the data revealed that these students met fewer times and for briefer periods than students answering "yes" to this question.

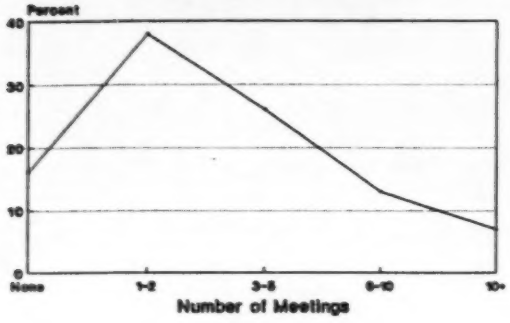
Figure 4 (facing page) contains perhaps the most important information, and is composed of four graphs pertaining to the level of student/faculty contact and two of its effects: 1) How satisfied the students are with the frequency of interaction, and 2) the effect of association on GPA. In Figure 4a, the largest number of students stated that they had 1-2 meetings with faculty per semester, while only 20% reported six or more interactions. Figure 4b shows that 49% of the respondents felt either satisfied or very satisfied with their frequency of faculty contact.

When the frequency of interactions was compared to student satisfaction with the number of interactions in Figure 4c, the results indicate that students classify the amount of association as satisfactory at 6-10 meetings per semester. This illustrates part of the relationship between faculty contact and satisfaction with the faculty, and helps to demonstrate that a rise in contact produces increases in student satisfaction. The resulting correlation was 0.55 between the number of meetings and satisfaction with the amount of interaction.

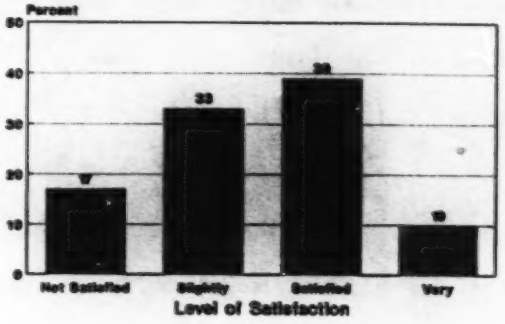
Modest gains in GPA were seen with increases in the level of

1984 Follow-Up Survey Figure 4

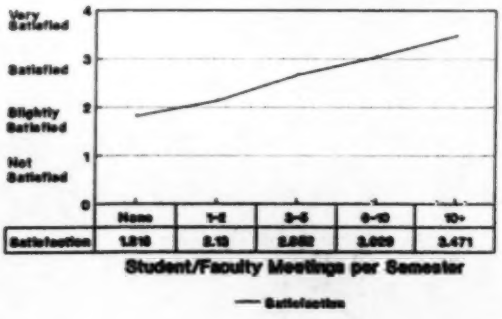
(a) Average Number of Faculty Interactions Per Semester



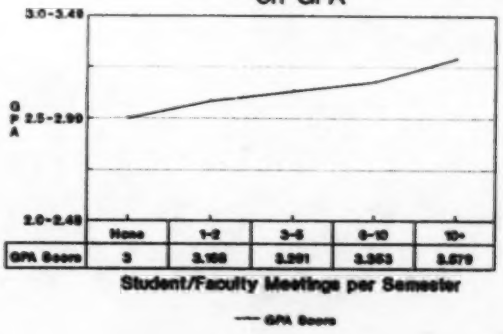
(b) Satisfaction with Frequency of Faculty Interactions



(c) Student/Faculty Contact and Student Satisfaction w/Contact Frequency



(d) Student/Faculty Contact Effect on GPA



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faculty contact (Figure 4d) which suggests that the better students tend to have more contact with faculty, or that more association with faculty may encourage students to perform better academically. These findings reinforce earlier trends noted in the CSEQ surveys which showed a relationship between faculty contact and a student's academic quality of effort.

Surprisingly, though, no clear relationship was noted between the faculty contact groups on satisfaction with college in general or the University in particular; students seemed generally pleased with the University without regard to their frequency of interaction with the faculty. Thus, it would appear that interaction or contact with the faculty is positive but may not be as important outside of the academic aspect of campus life.

Discussion

Overall, these results indicate satisfaction with undergraduate life in Chapel Hill. UNC seniors seem to be pleased with developmental opportunities on campus and believe that resources are available to assist them with a range of concerns.

The high level of student approval with their departmental (or major) advising is in pleasant contrast to other campus reports of students having difficulty in obtaining satisfactory guidance. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents felt the number and length of advisor meetings met their needs, and 65% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of those meetings. These results were achieved during appointments that

85% of the students reported averaged 15 minutes or less, and 65% of the students stated they met with their advisor once or less than once per semester. Nevertheless, the findings do indicate that increased contact with advisors in general does increase students' advising satisfaction, and might lead to additional progress in this area.

Finally, the findings concerning the helpful effects of faculty contact corroborate those found in campus CSEQ surveys, indicating that relationships with the faculty are a very positive aspect of the student experience. The cumulative amount of survey data continues to suggest that efforts to boost the student/faculty interaction level would be beneficial.

References

Flannelly, S.J. (1990). Student/Faculty contact and academic quality of effort: Excerpted results from CSEQ surveys, 1985-1988. UNC-CH Office of Institutional Research Report.

Flannelly, S.J. (1989). The 1984 freshmen as seniors. UNC-CH Office of Institutional Research Report.